

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO

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BEIRUT FOR RTDO, COMATT, AGATT

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: BEXP, SY

SUBJ: 1975 DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL FAIR

REF: STATE 022858

1. SUMMARY. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS APPROVAL OF COMMERCIAL PRESENCE (CPF) PARTICIPATION IN 1975 DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL FAIR.
END SUMMARY.

2. THE TWENTY-SECOND DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL FAIR WILL BE HELD JULY 25-AUGUST 20, 1975. OFFICIAL INVITATION FOR US TO PARTICIPATE, IF DEPTS HAVE NOT ALREADY RECEIVED IT, WILL BE DELIVERED SHORTLY BY SYRIAN EMBASSY WASHINGTON. WE HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED INITIAL DOCUMENTATION FROM MINISTRY OF ECONOMY AND FOREIGN TRADE, AND MINISTER IMADI HAS EXPRESSED TO AMBASSADOR HIS STRONG HOPE THAT US WILL BE IN FAIR THIS YEAR.

3. COUNTRY TEAM AND RTDO LEFEAVRE MET JAN 29 TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE US PARTICIPATION, WITH FOLLOWING INITIAL CONCLUSIONS:

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A. US PARTICIPATION IN 1974 FAIR, ORGANIZED ON CRASH, LAST-MINUTE BASIS, WAS EXTRAORDINARILY SUCCESSFUL. POSITIVE POLITICAL IMPACT FOLLOWING RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS AFTER SEVEN-YEAR BREAK EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS. COMMERCIAL BENEFIT FOR MOST OF THE THIRTEEN FIRMS WITH EXHIBITS RANGED FROM SATISFACTORY TO EXCELLENT. THEIR PARTICIPATION HELPED THEM RE-ENTER SYRIA MARKET. IN TERMS PUBLIC RELATIONS NO OTHER COMBINATION OF ACTIVITIES COULD HAVE PUT STAMP ON US RETURN TO SYRIA AND PRESENTED MESSAGE OF US TECHNOLOGICAL ACHIEVEMENTS AS EFFECTIVELY AS SKYLAB, SPACE AND COMPANY EXHIBITS AT US PAVILION.

B. US PARTICIPATION IN 1975 FAIR IS FULLY JUSTIFIED. POLITICALLY, RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS A YEAR AGO IS STILL FRESH IN SYRIAN MIND, AND RELATIONSHIP WE HAVE BEGUN TO DEVELOP REMAINS TENDER. WE WANT TO DEMONSTRATE THAT USIS GENUINELY INTERESTED IN DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING ITS RELATIONS BOTH WITH THE ARAB WORLD AND BILATERALLY WITH SYRIA. US CAPABILITIES FOR ASSISTING SYRIAN ECONOMY NEED TO BE DEMONSTRATED MORE FULLY. WE WANT TO BUILD SYRIAN CONFIDENCE IN US IN SUPPORT OF OUR CENTRAL ROLE IN MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT PROCESS. COMMERCIAL, SARG PLACES GREAT STORE IN FAIR AND OPENS ITS DOORS DEMONSTRABLY WIDER TO PARTICIPANT FIRMS. ALSO, MANY IMPORTANT US FIRMS ALREADY ACTIVE IN MIDDLE EAST HAVE YET TO RAISE FLAG HERE IN GROWING AND INCREASINGLY RECEPTIVE SYRIAN MARKET. IN FAIR CONTEXT, EXHIBITS AND FILMS SHOWING BEST OF US TECHNOLOGY CAN REACH OFTEN INACCESSIBLE SPECIALIZED AUDIENCES FROM MINISTRIES, GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIES AND PROCUREMENT ORGANIZATIONS AS WELL AS GENERAL PUBLIC AND CAN ALSO DIRECTLY SUPPORT COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL OBJECTIVES.

C. SPECIAL FACTORS OF DAMASCUS SITUATION WERE RECOGNIZED. WITHOUT LOCAL US BUSINESS PRESENCE, US FIRMS WOULD HAVE TO BE RECRUITED FROM BEIRUT OR OTHER REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS. DESIRABILITY OF GIVING FIRMS MAXIMUM POSSIBLE LEAD-TIME WAS NOTED ALONG WITH POSSIBILITY THAT FIRMS PARTICIPATING IN CAIRO FAIR MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN USING SAME EXHIBITS FOR DAMASCUS FAIR. INVALUABLE ASSISTANCE OF RTDO AND EMBASSY BEIRUT IN SUPPORTING 1974 EFFORT WAS ALSO RECOGNIZED. WHILE UNCLASSIFIED

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EMBASSY DAMASCUS STAFF HAS INCREASED OVER PAST YEAR AND NOW HAS EXPERIENCE GAINED IN 1974 FAIR, SUCCESSFUL PARTICIPATION THIS YEAR WILL UNDOUBTEDLY REQUIRE CERTAIN AMOUNT OF SUPPORT AND BACKSTOPPING FROM BEIRUT. AN EXPERIENCED EXHIBIT DIRECTOR WILL ALSO BE NEEDED.

D. DESIRABILITY OF HAVING CURRENT ECONOMIC/COMMERCIAL FACT SHEETS AND IDENTIFYING RELEVANT AREAS OF MARKET

POTENTIAL PRIOR TO APPROACHING US FIRMS WAS RECOGNIZED. EMBASSY ECONOMIC SECTION IS PREPARING THESE, IN ADDITION TO AIRGRAM FOLLOW-UP THIS CABLE AS REQUESTED PARA 6, STATE 279299.

E. PROBLEM OF OBTAINING SUFFICIENT SPACE ON FAIR GROUNDS, PREFERABLY IN A NONEXISTING PAVILION ALSO RECOGNIZED. IT WAS DECIDED THAT EMBASSY WOULD SEEK EXPLORATORY DISCUSSION WITH FAIR AUTHORITIES ON BASIS THAT AVAILABILITY OF SUITABLE SPACE WILL BE IMPORTANT FACTOR IN DETERMINATION WHETHER US WILL PARTICIPATE. AS TO SIZE, EMBASSY'S INITIAL THINKING IS THAT ABOUT 1,000 SQUARE METERS INSIDE FOR THIRTY-TWO BOOTHS TO BE USED BY 20 EXHIBITING FIRMS WOULD BE OPTIMAL (IN CONTRAST TO ABOUT 400 SQUARE METERS INSIDE LAST YEAR).

3. IT IS THIS EMBASSY'S STRONG RECOMMENDATION, BASED ON ALL FOREGOING CONSIDERATIONS, THAT USG HAVE COMMERCIAL PRESENCE PARTICIPATION (CPF) IN THIS YEAR'S DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL FAIR. FIRST CLASS AMERICAN PAVILION WILL MAKE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS, BOTH POLITICAL AND COMMERCIAL, IN SYRIA AND AMBASSADOR AND ENTIRE COUNTRY TEAM ARE READY TO GIVE STRONG AND FULL SUPPORT TO MAKE IT A SUCCESS. REQUEST STATE/COMMERCE APPROVAL SUCH PARTICIPATION AND ALLOCATION OF NECESSARY FUNDS. SEPTEL REGARDING PROPOSED USIA PARTICIPATION FOLLOWS. PELLETREAU

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